

Buffers In Arkansas

USDA is carrying out the National Buffer Initiative to increase the awareness, acceptance, and use of buffer practices by landowners.

The national goal of two million miles, resulted in Arkansas assisting with installation of 35,864 acres of buffers through September 30, 2001.

Plant Materials

The Booneville Plant Materials Center serves parts of Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma and is part of a national network of plant material centers, providing vegetative

solutions to conservation problems.

The Booneville Plant Materials Center works with other agencies and groups to develop and demonstrate vegetative establishment methods.

Plant Materials Center staff work on various vegetative projects throughout the year.

Two of the projects the center assisted with include the establishment of local ecotype vegetation on spoil banks for the Grand Prairie Irrigation Project; and the development of improved seeding and mulching practices on denuded highway construction sites for the Arkansas Highway Department.

Cost-Share Programs

NRCS provides technical assistance for all 1996 Farm Bill programs, except Conservation Reserve Program, which is a Farm Service Agency program.

In addition, many state agencies and non-profit organizations look to NRCS' technical assistance for support of their conservation cost-share programs.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

During 2001, more than 1,000 landowners applied for \$4,149,206 in funds for statewide resource-concern areas. Program-funding levels limited funding to 469 applicants,

who received a total of \$1,247,239 in funding.

The EQIP priority areas received 874 applicants requesting \$4,764,215, of which, 589 applicants received a total of \$2,078,224 in funding.

Wetlands Reserve Program

During 2001, Arkansas funded and contracted 40 WRP easements on 28,163 acres, totaling \$22,268,977.

Interest in WRP increased applicants to 373 with a project cost of \$90 million.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

During 2001, \$349,772 was approved to carry out 103 WHIP contracts involving 18,280 acres. These, in addition to previous years' accomplishments, total 339 contracts on 63,788 acres in Arkansas.

Forestry Incentives Program

During 2001, FIP obligations totaled \$606,166 to assist with improvements in Arkansas' forestry resource base.

Participation in 2001 led to establishment of 8,835 acres in tree seedlings, and 440 acres of forest stand improvements.



Pat Henry, construction engineer at Hope, examines a loblolly pine.

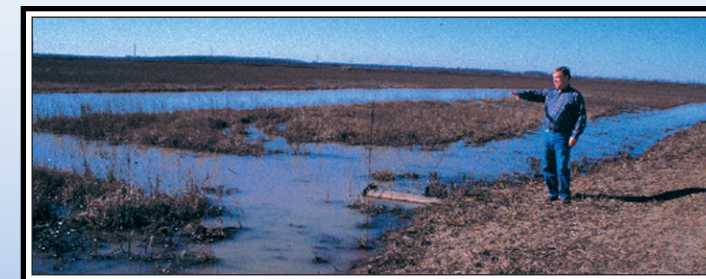
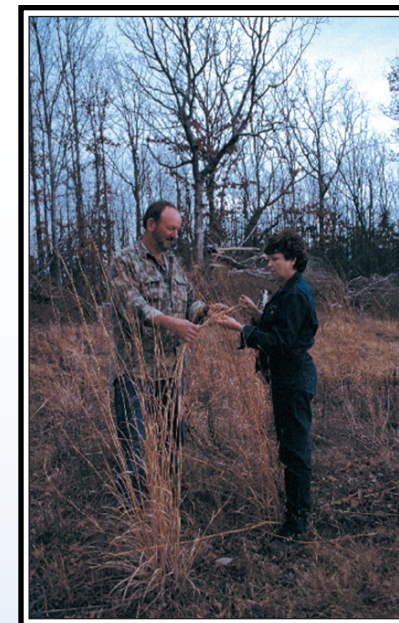
The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Arkansas Conservation Partnership (ACP) prohibit discrimination in all programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Annual Report 2001

Land, Water, People



Photos by Pat Hoeffken

2001 was a phenomenal year for Natural Resources Conservation Service in Arkansas. When the year began, struggling to recover from the destruction of the deadly ice storms that hit our beautiful state with such a vengeance during the holidays, we had the lessons learned from past disasters to guide us.

The snowstorm that devastated our state less than a year earlier taught us many important lessons. Lessons we applied in implementing the Emergency Watershed Protection program after the ice storms - quantify the problem, determine who can help, work quickly, and planning is invaluable.

The results? We not only survived yet another catastrophe in Arkansas, but we triumphed. Despite the damage, the landowners of Arkansas know to whom they can turn after such events. NRCS help comes fast; water, health, and life are protected; and new seeds can be sown.

But that just brings us up to the end of January. In addition to having one of the largest Farm Bill programs in the country, Arkansas also made conservation history in 2001. The Grand Prairie Irrigation Project - the only project of its kind or magnitude in the country - stands as one of our most important projects.

Water quantity is a problem for our entire state. The Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission declared all or portions of 11 counties critical ground

water areas; proposed all or portions of 11 more counties for the designation; and determined all or portions of 14 counties future study areas.

Through a strong partnership with federal, state and local agencies and organizations, NRCS led the implementation of the on-farm conservation practice design and construction. To date, the 11 members of the NRCS Irrigation Team in Lonoke completed 228 contracts valued at \$34,517,919. Payments totaling nearly \$7 million have been made to 117 farmers to complete 60 reservoirs, 81 tailwater pits and more than 60 miles of irrigation pipelines.

What an exciting year! We are looking forward to more innovations and successes in the coming year. This report is just a glimpse of what we accomplished in 365 days. It is small compared to the need - to secure the natural resources of Arkansas, ensuring future generations have abundant and high-quality natural resources, including soil, water, air, plants and animals, with which to sustain themselves.

Kalven L. Trice

Kalven L. Trice
State Conservationist



Grand Prairie - A Partnership Effort

The Grand Prairie Irrigation Project is becoming a reality for the people of Arkansas.

The project is a comprehensive water management plan designed to protect and preserve the Alluvial and Sparta aquifers, natural streams, and wetlands. The project allows for continued agricultural irrigation and provides habitat for millions of migratory waterfowl.

The Grand Prairie lies in east central Arkansas, between the White and Arkansas rivers. It includes 362,000 acres in portions of Arkansas, Monroe, Lonoke and Prairie counties.

The project combines a water delivery system with on-farm conservation practices. The delivery system consists of new canals and pipelines and existing streams.

Through a newly constructed pumping station, water will be pumped from the White River into the delivery



NRCS staff confer with a landowner as one of the newly built reservoirs fills.

system. Withdrawal from the river will be limited, ensuring fish, wildlife, navigation and other needs are also met.

On-farm conservation practices will consist of water storage reservoirs, pipelines, water control structures and tailwater recovery systems. Storage reservoirs will be constructed and filled from natural run-off captured through

tailwater recovery systems or from the delivery system when natural run-off is inadequate. During the growing season, water will be supplied to crops from run-off captured by tailwater recovery systems, the delivery system, reservoirs and wells.

The total project cost is \$270,512,000 (Oct. 1996 price). The cost for on-farm measures is estimated to be \$68,584,000 and included in the total project cost.

The planning phase complete, the Corps of Engineers will potentially begin construction of the pumping plant during 2002.

The project is a partnership effort with the Arkansas Game and Fish, Natural Heritage, and Soil and Water Conservation commissions; State of Arkansas; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. Geological Survey; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Memphis District; and White River Irrigation District.

Introduction

More than 260 NRCS employees serve all 75 Arkansas counties from 62 field service centers throughout the state.

NRCS offices are led by district conservationists, with NRCS and partner staff members of agronomists, biologists, foresters, resource and soil conservationists, engineers, soil scientists, soil conservation and engineering technicians, water management specialists and administrative support specialists. These employees work with private landowners to preserve and maintain the natural resources of Arkansas.

Earth Team

Through an emphasis on recruiting NRCS Earth Team volunteers, 78 percent of the state's field service centers use volunteers. In 2001, 992 volunteers donated 17,027 hours to help NRCS accomplish the successes outlined in this report.

Volunteers are an invaluable asset to the NRCS. Their contributions, which range from clerical services to conservation education to field surveying, are central to the success we enjoy in the Natural State.

Small Watershed Program

NRCS uses the Small Watershed Program to reduce flooding problems; develop erosion control and run-off management plans; help landowners control erosion; improve water quality; and conserve irrigation water.

During 2001, NRCS provided \$1,974,600 in financial assistance to begin construction of a Poinsett channel segment; develop seven new long-term contracts; and revise eight long-term contracts in the Little Red and Buffalo River Tributary watersheds.



The small watershed project near Alma, Ark.

Soil Surveys

Modern soil surveys are available for 68 of the 75 counties in Arkansas. Digital soil maps are available for 16 counties and will be available for five additional counties by the end of 2002.

Plans are also being developed to make revised and updated soil surveys available on CD-ROM.

Resource Conservation & Development

NRCS worked with the seven RC&D councils to increase and expand funding for rural development programs.

The Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission sponsors the Rural Fire Protection Program in Arkansas. Funding for the Rural Fire Protection Program in 2000 and 2001 totaled \$1,450,000.

During 2000 and 2001, the Rural Fire Protection Program assisted 675 fire departments.

Grazing Lands

Grazing lands technical assistance addresses one of Arkansas' important resources. NRCS has four full-time grazing lands specialists on staff and another 54 employees who spend more than half of their time working on grassland projects.

NRCS assisted landowners improve management on more than 100,000 acres of grazing land.

Partnerships are very important tools used to promote grassland activities. The Arkansas Grazing Lands Advisory Committee was formed to provide leadership and direction to the grazing lands programs. AGLAC's membership includes the Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts, Arkansas Forage and Grassland Council, Cattlemen's Association and Farm Bureau.

In 2001, AGLAC, in cooperation with NRCS and the Cooperative Extension Service, conducted 20 workshops around the state. More than 700 landowners and ranchers attended the workshops. More than 3,000 people attended training sessions and field days.

Emergency Watershed Protection

Emergency Watershed Protection helps restore watersheds ravaged by natural disasters.

Arkansas committed more than \$1.5 million in EWP funds in 2001 for clean-up after the December 2000 ice storms damaged and knocked down millions of trees.

The money was used to install wildfire hazard reduction practices such as fire breaks and debris piling on private non-industrial forest lands across the state to reduce the risk of wildfires.

NRCS purchased floodplain easements on approximately 1,000 acres, helping reduce flood damages and subsequent claims for government assistance and will create riparian buffers that provide multiple conservation benefits.



Cross fencing is a great grazing lands management technique.